

Strengthen Thy Brethren

It is the lessons that God has taught me when I look in the mirror that I write about. I have fought and continue the fight against spiritual complacency in my own life, it is my own battle tales that I share. I know what terror backslidden Christians feel when faced with impending disaster, because I felt it myself at a time when I believed in "Once Saved, Always Saved" and depended on a positive confession I made when I was nine for my salvation while I lived in sin. I will never again be seized with that terror of realizing I was not right with God and I might die at any moment. I have faced death again since that day nearly twenty years ago, and all I had was the peace that passes all understanding.



Sometimes the most terrifying thing we can do is look into the mirror, to see ourselves as we really are. It is so much easier using a magnifying glass on others than the mirror on ourselves. Yet this is exactly what Christ asks us to do. There is only so much we can see when looking at others, but when we look at ourselves we see get the whole picture.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?
Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV) 

Even when we do examine ourselves our hearts are so wicked that only God can reveal the things hidden deep in them that are displeasing to Him, the things that we hide even from ourselves. Take the incident where Peter denied knowing Christ. We don't get a clear glimpse into Peter's heart when he denied Christ, but we can imagine that he was seized with terror that he might be crucified right next to him if he admitted knowing Him. Peter wasn't as strong as he thought and he learned this lesson the hard way.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.
Luke 22:31-34 (KJV) 

Jesus was trying to tell Peter that he was in danger of losing his faith but Peter did not understand. He boasted that he would follow Jesus anywhere. Did Satan sift Peter as wheat? Yes, he did. Did Peter's faith fail? I say no! When Peter denied Christ his faith suffered a terrible setback but look at his reaction to the realization:

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.
Luke 22:61-62 (KJV) 

Jesus prayed to the Father that Peter's faith wouldn't fail, do you think for a moment God would allow it to? If Peter's faith had failed he would not have cried so bitterly. Peter realized that his faith was a lot weaker than he thought it was. I feel a similar feeling every time I stumble and sin, don't you? In our hearts we strive to slay

dragons and live mighty lives of spiritual victory but then temptation comes along and the cold realization that we are all but flesh and blood. Can you feel Peter's discouragement in that moment? And he had to look into Jesus eyes right after such betrayal!

**And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
Galatians 6:9 (KJV)** 

The real test of our faith is not how many times we stumble and fall, but how many times we pick ourselves back up, brush ourselves off and resume the battle! Jesus told Peter that his faith would be tested and that he would fail the test. But He also told Peter that He prayed his faith would not fail, so it obviously didn't. Then Christ told Peter that when he was converted, to strengthen the brethren. Notice Jesus didn't say if you are converted but when!

**So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.
John 21:15 (KJV)** 

John 21:15-19  tells of when Peter was converted, where he is given the privilege of acknowledging his love for Christ three times to cancel out the three times he denied Him. As you see Jesus once again tells Peter to feed the flock. It seems to me that Christ is not only telling Peter to strengthen his brethren in general, but to take this specific experience and use it to do so.

Something that God has shown me unmistakably is that He gives us our experiences and struggles for a reason. Yes, to strengthen us personally, but more He wants each and every one of us to feed His sheep, to strengthen our brethren with the knowledge and unique experiences He has given just to us. This is the purpose of this blog, to share what God has shown me and done for me. He wants us all to do the same. We don't have to all have blogs, but we do need to share what God has done for us with those who He puts in our path. We need to set aside fear of rejection and persecution. There are people in this world that can only be reached for Christ by you. Will you obey the Lord and feed His sheep?

